

NAME: Fujii, Yoshito DATE OF BIRTH: 4/14/1901 PLACE OF BIRTH: Hiroshima
Age: 73 Sex: M Marital Status: _____ Education: University

PRE-WAR:

Date of arrival in U.S.: 6/1919 Age: 19 M.S. S Port of entry: Seattle
Occupation/s: 1. Trading Company 2. Bottling Business 3. Hotel owner
Place of residence: 1. Seattle, Washington 2. _____ 3. _____
Religious affiliation: Buddhist Church
Community organizations/activities: President of the Junior Division of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce.

EVACUATION:

Name of assembly center: North Dakota (Internment Camp), Puyallup Assembly Center
Name of relocation center: Minidoka, Idaho Had a bank _____
Dispensation of property: Leased - Bottling Plant Names of bank/s: account.
Jobs held in camp: 1. Executive Secretary (Puyallup) 2. Housing adjustor (Minidoka)
Jobs held outside of camp: _____ 3. Chairman of the board (Mini.
Left camp to go to: Seattle, Washington

POST-WAR:

Date returned to West Coast: April 1945
Address/es: 1. Seattle, Washington 2. _____
3. _____
Religious affiliation: Buddhist Church
Activities: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
If deceased, date, place and age at time of death: _____

Name of interviewer: Heihachiro Takarabe Date: 5/20/74 Place: Seattle, Wash.

Translator Naniko Nagai

NAME: Yoshito Fujii

AGE: 73

BIRTHDATE: April 14, 1901

BIRTHPLACE: Hiroshima Ken

WHAT YEAR AND AGE DID YOU COME TO THE U.S.: 1919, Age 19

MAJOR OCCUPATION: (HUSBAND OR WIFE?)

RELOCATION CAMP: Minidoka

Interviewed date: May 20, 1974

Interviewer: Heihachiro Takarabe

Translated date:

Translator: Mariko Magee

YOSHITO FUJII

Q. Not too many books have been published on the Issei, especially books written in English. We're trying to collect information on various experiences the Issei had and make it available to the Sansei and Yonsei.

A. Oh.

Q. We're making our best efforts.

A. Are you going to send the materials to Japan?

Q. Japanese people in Japan don't know about the Issei either.

A. They don't.

Q. We'll show it to the Sansei, Yonsei and students at first. I'd like to ask you a favor in answering various questions.

A. Yes, I will, I came here as a student at first.

Q. Did you?

A. There was a minister of the Methodist Church named Yamaha at that time. He was in Los Angeles. He was good at leading young people. I attended school during the week and visited him on Sundays. I'm from a Buddhist family. Being from Hiroshima where Buddhism was widely propagated, my father was an ardent Buddhist. As you'll see in the history, there were seven () in Seattle. Three out of the seven are known at present; however, four of them aren't. My brother is one of the above mentioned three. As you may know, it's been fifty years since the Buddhist Church was started in the U.S. A celebration will be held in San Francisco. I'll attend it. As a memorial project, we are compiling the Church history and will publish a book, which is going pretty well. I possess almost all of the Church history.

Q. Do you have a copy? Shall I take it with me? I'll return it to you after copying it.

A. I'll copy it and give you a set.

Q. I'd like to have it.

A. Everything will go to a publisher. These are all history, from the beginning to the present. These are the successive chairmen. This is Chojiro, the first president. This is Yoshito Fujii, myself. This is (Hisato) Fujii, my brother.

Q. Is Chojiro your brother?

A. Yes. He is my older brother. He worked hard (to establish the Church) in 1901. He was twenty-three years old then.

Q. If it's possible, I'd like to borrow it.

A. Here are the originals. Not the distinguished services, but all of the history will be written. I'll give it to you, for I have some copies.

Q. It'll be helpful.

A. I made it recently.

← ③ A. I appreciate it.

← A. I was taking a book at the old records written in my school days.

I was majoring in Sociology at the University of Washington. I happened to find the records written in 1925. I had forgotten all about them. They are about the Buddhist Church at that time.

Q. In 1925?

A. In 1925.

Q. I can copy it at a low cost at home. May I take it with me?

A. I'll make a copy for you.

Q. I'll ask () to copy it.

A. I just have one (). It's fun just to take a look at the records of those days. There are copies of reports and information on membership.

Q. I'd like to take time and read it.

A. Looking back, it was fifty years ago. I wrote a conclusion in the back. I'm not sure whether or not my opinions at that time were right. I felt Buddhism was too difficult for the Nisei and Sansei to understand. Of course, everything was done in Japanese then. It was impossible for them to understand it. They couldn't appreciate it no matter how well preachers advocated it. They attended the church and joined in some activities, but all of them left after reached a certain age. Things like that are all recorded. The number of Sunday school children is recorded. The number decreased gradually. How to keep the young people with the church was a problem. Thinking it over now, I daresay that offering a sports program did the most toward that end. We started it after 1925. There were about forty members on our baseball team. A football team and a basketball team were also formed after that. Thus, we attracted young people to the church. The small children were no problem. Their parents forced them to attend Sunday school. We gave them some candy and "osenbei."¹ However, when they reached a certain age, they were no longer satisfied with it and ceased to attend the church. (I myself was that way.) I came here at the age of nineteen. I went to senior high school and then a university. I attended the Methodist Church I've mentioned before, a Baptist Church and another small church every Sunday. I remember all about those days. People stood up and talked about their experiences. Three or four people were appointed to talk about the accidents and incidents they'd had. They expressed their feelings. They felt they were protected by God.

Q. Let me ask () here to copy it.

A. I'll copy it for you.

Q. I'd like to look into it. Do you have anything else?

A. (Spreading something) Here's the Buddhist Church's.....I made it myself. These are the successive presidents with the distinguished services. Later on, I'll recognize other presidents and also the church officers.

Q. Was it included in this?

A. This is about the history. I can't include such details in it. This is the list of (preachers). I sent it to Mr. Hirota of "Nishi Hongan, jr."² He approved and notarized it and sent it back to me. I wanted to know for sure if my records were correct or not.

Q. "Jodo Shinshu?"³

A. That's right.

Q. It's quite a business, isn't it?

A. The church members, (making the history now), call me on the phone concerning the records I have.

Q. Nobody else has it.

A. It's very valuable.

A. I have all of the records - from the rewards for the retiring people to the happenings of the past.

Q. It's very precious.

A. This is the list.

Q. Is the church here a branch? The one in Sacramento...

A. Yes, the one in Sacramento is.

Q. How many branches do you have?

A. We have five branches.

Q. You have one in San Jose.

A. Yes. In Sacramento, Fresno, Los Angeles and here - five in all.
I have more records. This is just a part.

Q. This is really great.

A. It's a good reference to keep. Other people don't appreciate its value, but people studying in this field do. I'm organizing the various records of our history. The memorial service is coming now. When I constructed a monument.....Do you know?

Q. No.

A. I took charge when we constructed that. I was a president of that committee. By the time we have a memorial service, it will have been twenty-five years ago. I was asked to explain it briefly during the program. I need materials for it and I am recalling my faint memories. Fortunately, I have some records about it.

Q. Great! Few people have records.

A. I have all of the records about the relocation camp during the war. The camp in Minnesota.....The library of the University of Washington wants them very badly.

Q. I'll bet.

A. Three volumes of this thickness are completely filled. Eventually I'll donate them.

Q. You don't have to donate them, but just let the library keep them. You can take them back any time you want to. You might have book worms at home, whereas you don't have such a danger in the library. However, once you put them in, it's complicated getting them back. You have to sign papers and so on.

A. I take a look at them once in a while. The documentaries, information about the community counsel (), and other things are in it.

Q. It's worth a fortune.

A. If I had enough time, I'd like to publish a book. I don't have enough time, though.

Q. What do you do at present?

A. As the name card I've given to you shows, I own apartments. I leave the business to other people, but I still have one business after another, somehow.

Q. Church business keeps you busy, doesn't it?

A. I'm sort of retired from the church. However, people consult me and ask my opinions. They want me to attend meetings; therefore, I do.

Q. You're an adviser, aren't you?

A. I'm the first president and also serve in an advisory capacity. It's just like being in the active service. I have to compile the history.

Q. You'll feel satisfied after you achieve it.

A. Yes. It'll contribute something to the world later on. I'd like to do my best as long as I'm able to move. I just hardly have enough time.

Q. I'll ask you about your life in Japan, in the U.S., during the war, in the camp, and after the war - I'll ask the questions in chronological order. Are you ready?

A. Yes.

Q. What's your name? Fujii

A. Yoshito.

Q. Are you from Hiroshima?

A. Yes, I am.

Q. When were you born?

A. In 1901. On the 14th of April.

Q. You're seventy.....

A. I'm seventy-three years old. My birthday is fifteen days different from the Japanese emperor's.

Q. Different?

A. Mine is fifteen days earlier. His birthday is on April the 29th.

Q. Was your family religion Shinshu?

A. Yes, it was Buddhism. My father came here for the first time when the children were little. I hadn't been born yet.

Q. Here?

A. Yes. It was in ¹⁸1984, the twenty-seventh year of the Meiji period. He brought my elder brother here, who was sixteen years old then. My father stayed for two years to have a look at the U.S. He looked here and there in the northern part of the U.S. with Chajiro for two years. Two years later, he returned to Japan and urged young people to go to the new world. According to the records, he got five hundred and thirty young people. He sent them from Hiroshima to the U.S. It is one of the reasons why there were so many immigrants from Hiroshima.

Q. What was your father's occupation?

A. He was a farmer. Our family was an old one. My father represented the 42nd generation, and I represent the 43rd, according to the statistics. According to the Japanese family history.....There were a lot of children in our main family. If you were divide the property among all of us, though we had a pretty large piece of property, how little each would get! The Japanese family system then was that an heir should succeed to a family house. Property was divided among the children. What can you do in the future with such a limited amount of property? My father visited each village, canvassing for young people to go abroad. He

left Chojiro in Seattle in order to let him take care of the young people from Japan. First of all, my brother started Fujii Hotel. Our first business here was running a hotel. He was the originator of the Japanese hotel business here. He built a hotel and opened it in 1899. It was about seventy years ago. The young people from Japan - Hiroshima - stayed in the hotel. My father met with a lot of danger while visiting various places. He got on a boat from (), he had to stay on board overnight on the way because a storm stopped the boat. It was a dangerous experience. While he was walking on a mountain trail from here to () by himself, he was attacked by a thief.

Q. Caucasian?

A. I think so. He said that man was a thief. He couldn't rely on anything else but "namuamidabutsu."⁴ He wrote it down and kept it inside his clothes. That was his belief. He had a strong faith in (Buddha), for his life had been saved many times. When I was a child, I wasn't allowed to eat meals without saying "namuamidabutsu." My elder brother was here. I graduated from a junior high school and was planning to go to senior high school in Japan. My brother, who was back in Japan for the time being, asked me if I'd like to get a higher education. I asked him if I could go to the U.S. for study. He said, "yes." I said I'd be happy to do so. I graduated from a junior high school in April and came here in June. It was destiny for me to come here.

Q. When was it?

A. In 1919.

Q. In 1919?

A. Yes. It was right after World War I. It broke out in 1914. I came here in () year after it was over.

Q. Did your father live in Japan continuously after that?

A. Yes.

Q. Instead of coming here himself, he sent young people.

A. Yes. But it was when he was young. By the time I left Japan, he had already stopped doing it. He did it around 1900.

Q. Around the time you were born?

A. He continued it til 1905. He may have sent some people even after that, but I'm not sure. Mr. Kawasaki, who came here in 1906, has the record on it at home. Other records say that my father sent over five-hundred people.

Q. You and your brother had quite a big age difference.

A. That's right. If he were alive, he would be in his nineties. He was sixteen years old when he came here in 1894. How long ago was it? It was in the eleventh year of the Meiji period. He was twenty-three or four years older than I. He would have been ninety-seven or eight years old now - almost a hundred.

Q. Did you hear about any of the experiences your brother had had?

A. My brother was healthy and I was busy attending school. So, I didn't hear about his experiences too much. He was an aggressive man, and was active in the church, prefectural association, and the Japanese association.

Q. He started a hotel business at the age of sixteen?

A. He came here at the age of sixteen. He opened a hotel five years later when he was twenty-one.

Q. Still, he was young. That's great!

A. He established the Buddhist Church here at the age of twenty-three. He overcame a lot of economic hardship. He could compete with others, because he had been working and had established his foundation in life.

This, together with his experiences, had been very helpful.

Q. You came here when you were nineteen years old. Did you go to high school right away?

A. Yes, I did. I entered Broadway High School, which is a community college now. I transferred to Franklin High School later. I graduated from it in 1924. I got into the University of Washington in 1924 and graduated in 1928. I was in a post-graduate program for a year after that. I studied sociology further.

Q. Did you earn your M.A. degree?

A. I was about to earn it; however, the professor for my study left for Chicago, but I couldn't. I didn't feel it too important to get an M.A. degree then and gave it up. I guess I should have gotten it. I was most anxious to take a job offered to me at that time.

Q. What had you imagined about the U.S. before you left Japan?

A. I didn't think of it. I just imagined it would be a good country with a lot of future prospects. I didn't have any deep thoughts. I didn't intend to stay in the U.S. for such a long time when I left Japan. Everybody was planning to make money in the U.S. and return to Japan. I thought it would take at least five years to finish my education. I felt as if five years were forever. I told my parents, and elder sister said five years wouldn't be enough and I would need ten years. Ten years would be too long. I wondered how I could bear waiting for such a long time.

Q. Is that so.

A. I was planning to study in the U.S. and be active in Japan later. I didn't imagine I'd live in the U.S.

Q. What was your first impression of the U.S.?

A. I felt I had come to a different place -- a new place, new life, new school..... As for my own feelings, I enjoyed myself. When I was young, I loved sports, especially tennis. I could play tennis to my heart's content. However, I wasn't satisfied with my school life a hundred percent.

Q. What made you feel so?

A. School life here was too loose. In Japan, students were neatly dressed in their uniforms and school caps. They were orderly. Students here were too loose. I felt somewhat dissatisfied. But I felt content with my life in itself. I had recreation every Sunday.

Q. What kind of people were on board the boat with you?

A. I didn't know anybody on board in the beginning. As I started mentioning that my elder brother was running Fujii Hotel, I got attention from people. Most of the immigrants knew the hotel. They said, "You're Mr. Fujii's younger brother," and were kind to me. One of those people, who had heard of me, was from (the same village as mine.) He returned to Japan to pick up his bride. I felt as if he were my relative or something. The voyage was fun.

Q. I see. "Picture-marriages" were popular at that time, weren't they?

A. Yes, they were very popular. It was hard to get a space on the ship, for there were a lot of people going to the U.S. in those days. Luckily I got a space after two months. Making reservations was tough. We had to go to Kobe or Yokohama and wait there. The shipping company didn't tell us when we'd get a space. They just told us to be ready so that we could start anytime. () I couldn't succeed in Kobe. Then, I went to Yokohama and waited in a hotel for an opening. It was that crowded. I got on "kashima-maru." The boat was large and crowded.

Q. What were the brides of picture-marriages like? Were they disappointed? Did they have any problems?

A. I daresay they had problems. There were both successful and unsuccessful cases among the "picture-marriages." The brides were people who wanted to come to the U.S. They achieved their first goal at any rate. They seemed to be happy.

Q. Is that right? Were most cases successful?

A. They were so-so. I don't know for sure. They stayed in Fijii Hotel. Many young people came over from Sacramento to meet their brides. I couldn't tell who were farmers and who weren't, for all were dressed very well. They even wore white gloves. Though they had dark complexions, they dressed dandily. Some couples had too much difference in their ages. They might have had a problem. The impression you get from pictures could be quite different from reality. Anyway, they were happily married as a whole. There were some interesting cases.

Q. For example?

A. Some brides of "picture-marriages" just wanted to get here rather than to get married.

Q. Even women did that sort of thing?

A. Yes, I'm afraid they weren't satisfied with their husbands.

Q. Did they get divorced?

A. No. They went to their destination. I don't know what happened after that. The brides came here in their "kimono."⁵ As soon as they got here, they were taken to Abe Dress Shop, which was close to us, to buy western style dresses. You can walk on the street in "kimono" without feeling embarrassed these days. At that time, it was too embarrassing to do so.

Q. I guess it was.

A. The Japanese ladies looked different and beautiful in western style dresses. For some of them, it was the first time to wear western style dresses. They put their shoes on backward and couldn't move well.

Q. What kind of experiences did you have during your high school days?

A. The other students were several years younger than I. I had graduated from a senior high school in Japan. The students there looked childish in the beginning. I didn't go to high school to learn anything. I just attended it. I took the subjects I was good at in the beginning. I put off an English class. I was required to take it later anyway. Except for that, the classes were rather easy. Having taken math courses in Japan, I was good at math. The teacher praised me and I was popular in the class. It was fun. I had some Japanese friends. I was good at math and drawing, because I was older than the others. I took only my favorite courses. I took a Spanish course to meet the foreign language requirement. Those children did better than I in the Spanish class. I don't recall any hardship at that time.

Q. Did you enjoy yourself?

A. I didn't go to high school for the purpose of study but for fun. I studied what I wanted to learn seriously in college.

Q. Sociology?

A. Yes. The reason I majored in Sociology was that I was influenced by Professor Wilson. He was an expert professor of sociology. There was a Japanese man here, who had graduated from Waseda University. He came here to study and was an editor of the North American (). He went to Los Angeles and established a Japanese language school. His name was Sugimatsu. He and I were peers and studied sociology together. Sociology wasn't offered in Japanese colleges then. We talked ambitiously about opening up a sociology department in Japanese colleges. The study

was fun. I collected various statistics and studied them. I love making records. I visited the police station in Seattle for half a year to get the records of past crimes. As for crimes among the Japanese people, almost every case was one of drunkenness.

Q. Was it?

A. Drunken drivers. Serious crimes were rare. Some people gambled at clubs and committed murder, though. Burglaries were rare. Compared with the sociological statistics for crimes committed by members of other races, the crime rate for Japanese people was very low.

Q. I'll bet.

A. Most of them weren't serious crimes but just light ones. In order to make such statistics about Japanese people, I studied the history of Japanese people in Seattle. I studied how they had been developing in each section of Seattle. I did research on () for my graduate study.

Q. What was it?

A. (). I studied the relationship between Japanese culture or oriental culture and trade. In other words, I studied the statistics on how Japanese people had been developing on the Pacific coast of the U.S. I made statistics on Japanese trade here in the past and on the increase of the Japanese population. The more trade developed, the more population. Then, Japanese culture was introduced there. I made a map and showed the distribution with different colors. I can't recall whether I left the original map at the university or not. It was big.

Dr. (Mc Kingee) praised me for the map and said he would give me an M.A. degree anytime. I worked very hard. I studied trade on the Pacific coast, in New York and in South America. It was obvious that Japanese trade had been developing from the U.S. Pacific coast to other parts of the world every year.

Q. Do you have the original paper?

A. No.

Q. That's too bad.

A. I may have done something with it at the time of the evacuation. I've looked for it, but I couldn't find it. I did my best in completing it. I worked on it till four a.m. everyday. I started working on it hard at night. I couldn't have done it, otherwise. I don't know where the materials are now. I looked for them as soon as I came back from the camp, but I couldn't locate them. I made some other maps, too.

Too bad!

Q. What a pity! When did you graduate?

A. In 1928.

Q. In 1928?

A. I'd been in the M.A. program for a year beginning in 1928. I didn't get through the program, though.

Q. What did you do after graduating from college?

A. Trade. I worked for Hanasaki Trading Company. We exported lumber to Japan. I quit working for the company. In the meantime, I got married. Not being satisfied with working for somebody, I made up my mind to open up my own business. I got an opportunity to get into the bottling industry. You don't find such a small business these days, but I dealt with 7-Up and Coca-Cola. One Japanese man owned a bottling plant here. I was president of the Junior Division of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce. I took the initiative in holding a baseball tournament on the fourth of July. There were quite a few baseball teams here and there. The Junior Division, which was a sponsor, invited eighteen teams here. We divided our playground and held a tournament on the holiday. I had to order soda bottles for the players on the

field. I went to the owner of the Japanese bottling company to order soda beforehand. He said he was out of stock. I said teasingly, "Don't crack a joke. Why can't you supply eighteen cases of soda? You own a bottling plant. What kind of monkey business do you have?" I needed soda from him by Sunday. My joke brought me something unexpected. I told him, "You're the only Japanese bottling dealer here. You're monopolizing among Japanese people. Don't lose courage but hustle in business as hard as caucasians." Later, he visited and asked me if I could join his business as a partner. I told him I was too inexperienced in that field of business. He insisted on leasing his plant to me at a reasonable price. He visited me on Saturday and came back to me on Monday. A friend of mine, Mr. Matsuda, was practicing law here at that time. He has a law office in Chicago now. We went to his office to make a bill of sale. I had my office in the Smith Tower. I felt it was a sort of achievement to open up my office after graduating from college. I didn't have any special purpose, though. Though I hadn't said anything other than a joke, I couldn't chicken out of the deal. I had to be a man. The owner compromised saying that he would lease it at a price convenient for me. Then, I agreed. I was surprised to see the plant. It looked as if it were a nominal plant. It was unequipped. I hadn't imagined I'd be in the bottling business; therefore, I hadn't had the slightest knowledge about it. The owner (mr. Kogitani) said he would help me for a month or so till I could learn the business. I went to a Japanese town to find some workers for my plant. I found a few people interested in it. I hired them. Thus, I had run the business till the war broke out. I wasn't experienced with that business. It was not related to my speciality in college. However, my life with that business was very exciting. I worked hard. It took five years to

establish a foundation. I began to feel interested in the business after five years' struggle. There were about two hundred Japanese restaurants and cafes here at that time.

Q. Oh!

A. Everybody ordered soda from us. We made our delivery rounds with a truck twice a month. We had three trucks to do our business. I paid for the lease completely within five years. I even thought about opening up the same business in Japan. There are () in this apartment. The operators or owners changed many times. We had a meeting once a month and discussed various things. It was an interesting experience for me.

Q. What kind of office did you have?

A. My partner was a lawyer. I'd majored in sociology. The clients were all Issei people. Since Matsuda didn't understand Japanese very well, I interpreted for him. I wasn't sure if the business would work out all right. I opened up an office as a trial. It didn't work out. We had some business, but we just helped people mostly. We couldn't make a good business.

Q. Then, you were engaged in the bottling company.

A. Yes. That business lasted till the war. After the war started, I became an intern. Then, my wife and children took over the business. We had to close up our business because of the evacuation. We used one thousand sacks of sugar each year. However, the government began to regulate sugar because of the sugar shortage during the war. If you had your past records to show how much sugar you had been consuming, you got a quota for that amount of sugar. The bottling companies, which were expanding their business, had to rely on the quotas of others. If one company leases its plant to another, the latter can get the quota of

sugar given to the former. I offered my quota of sugar that way.

Q. I see.

A. I leased a part of my plant to another company. I was an intern. Economically speaking, I was managing the payments and everything else.

Q. What did you do during the war?

A. All of us went to Idaho.

Q. What did you do with your plant?

A. It was open.

Q. Since you'd leased it, you had an income from it?

A. Yes. A caucasian leaseholder paid me. It was just rent, not a business commission.

Q. He used my machinery, but what he really wanted was my quota of sugar. I had one thousand sacks of sugar as my allowance. Suppose each sack'd cost two dollars, I had a two thousand-dollar quota. It was quite a large sum of money at that time. The leaseholder could pay the low rent easily.

Q. Going back a little, what did you do during the depression?

A. There was a depression at one time. But we weren't affected by the depression too much. Our business was small from the start. We didn't invest too much money in the business. We spent money just for trucks, bottling machinery, a washer, and laborers. We hardly had any cash left.

Q. It was in the beginning, wasn't it?

A. Yes, during the first three years. I bought a (building) there.

It was interesting. I still keep the account at a bank. Mr. (Kahkey), who was a German, was kind to us Japanese. He was kind to me from the start. It's still in Seattle. There was a winery there. It used to be a big hotel building and its basement was used as a winery. Since the business was expanding, they built a new building in (). Then,

the building was put up for sale. They didn't find any buyers, for the price was high. One morning, when I went to a bank, Mr. (Kahkey) called me. I wondered what on earth he'd called me for. He said, "I have a building for you. Are you interested in buying it?" I said, "I'm interested in it, but where will I get the money? How can I buy it." He said, "What's a bank for? You are ()." I asked him if the bank could finance me, and he answered that the bank could. He told me that bank wouldn't have any business if there were no poor guys. He explained to me about the price and downpayment. He knew about the winery very well, for he was the director. He set a high price for others. I just paid a \$1,200 downpayment. He set the price as high as \$30,000 for others. However, I paid \$9,000 as a total, less than \$10,000. I thought it was a cheap deal. After he'd financed me and bought it, I collected \$40 as monthly rent; that is, a hotel opened in the building and they paid \$40 as monthly rent. Therefore, my loan payment was almost free. It was a good deal. He said that a bank could run its business because people like me got a loan from them. He also said that even if I didn't have cash, I should build up my credit. Holding credit is worth having cash. No matter how much you buy, you should make the payment at least a day before the due date. Then, you can get credit anywhere. I had six payments at that time; therefore, my bank account was empty. But I worked on bookkeeping and making payments very hard. I made all of the payments on time. I didn't want to trouble other people with my debts. I would go to the bank if I needed to. Thus, I built up my credit gradually because of Mr. (Kahkey's) advice. People complain that they can't have their own business because they don't have any money and credit. I don't think it's true. You should build up your credit first. I learned this through him. I could have

learned more if he had been alive after the war. He died during the war. He gave me a good lesson. It was the truth.

Q. You didn't have any debts during the depression?

A. No debt. Though I was making payments, I didn't fall into debt with anybody, I had cleared my loans by the time the war broke out. I was ready to be sent anywhere. I didn't have any savings. While I was in the camp, I got money from the leaseholder. I saved the extra money and increased my savings gradually. I was lucky in that sense. ().

Q. Japanese people were prohibited from purchasing homes and land before the war, weren't they?

A. Right. Everybody purchased his property as a member of a corporation. I bought (the one in Cascade) in my sister-in-law's name. The hotel is still registered as a corporation. I own four corporations now. If you put everything into one corporation, you may lose it all by one failure. If you own different corporation, you are safer. But having (different) people to operate each corporation is troublesome. Income tax and book keeping are complex.

Q. You need four people.

A. Yes. () is all different. I have to think out new ideas one after another.

Q. When did you marry?

A. In 1941. She also went to a university.

Q. Did she?

A. I was thirty years old then.

Q. Had you known her for a long time before you married?

A. Yes, I had.

Q. Was it a love match?

A. Well...we got our parents' consent, though. Formerly, I had intended

to go back to Japan. When I was a university student, around 1922 or 1924, my parents passed away. My father died,, and my mother died later. She was my real mother. My father was sick when I left Japan. I felt worried about him. I told myself that my younger sister and my elder brother's son would take care of him. My mother loved me very much. My mother was healthy. But she died of typhoid within a week. It happened all of the sudden. Typhoid was prevalent in Japan at that time. I dreamed something strange one night. So did my elder brother. Then, we got a telegram from Japan to report our mother's death. No long distance call but a telegram at that time...My desire to return to Japan disappeared at that time. Being young, I wanted to graduate from college as soon as possible in order to make my parents happy. The study was for them rather than for myself. I felt discouraged to have lost my parents whose happiness had been mine. I no longer desired to return to Japan. I thought about the U.S., Japan, and my position. A lot of Japanese people stowed away on a boat to the U.S. in those days. I was free to stay in the U.S. as long as I wanted to. Going back to Japan seemed to be a crime. I didn't want to succeed to any family property. I decided to stay in the U.S. I was willing to visit Japan once in a while. I'm not sure if I should have returned to Japan or not. I don't believe I should have returned to Japan. Staying here was only natural.

Q. Did you own the bottling company when you married?

A. No. I married before owning it. I was helping with my elder brother's Fujii Hotel. My elder brother became a paralytic. He owned several stores including a liquor store. I helped with his business for free.

Q. Before the war, most of the Issei came here at the age of seventeen or eighteen. They were single. The Issei who got married were all right. But the bachelor Issei must have led a rough life.

A. They had a rough life, they enjoyed themselves. They worked hard during the day and played at night as much as they liked. They didn't have a home to worry about. There were a lot of restaurants here. They went to the restaurant to eat or drink. Living in a nearby hotel, they could go back to their dwelling from the restaurant easily. Many Japanese young men played around at Enoki Hotel. Especially in the summer season, you saw a number of them on the street here and there. The hotel was located on the main street. When it got late, they went back and slept. In the morning, they went to work. Their jobs varied. Most of them worked in markets. Wholesale stores...They went to work at six or seven o'clock in the morning, and came back in the early evening. They took a bath in the evening and changed their clothes. Then, they went out here and there. Movies, for example. Their lives were free. Some might have felt lonely. But most of the young Japanese people had a big hope to earn money and go back to Japan. Coming to their hope, they didn't feel too lonely. They didn't know when their dream would come true, but they didn't feel hasty. Some of them had girlfriends. Most of them were dreaming of going back to Japan and getting married in the future. They didn't think about anything deeply. They were just happy as they were.

Q. Were there gambling places in Seattle?

A. Yes. Around the Bush Garden.

Q. I see. Was gambling popular among Japanese people.

A. Yes it was.

Q. What about Chinese people?

A. Chinese people had a gambling place called (). Quite a few young people went there. Only the same people went there. I didn't feel like going there. It wasn't fun. It was kind of a habit. If you didn't go there at all, you wouldn't pick up a bad habit.

Q. Even today, those addicts indulge in gambling.

A. They even gamble secretly. At that time, they gambled openly. They killed their time there. You could eat meals at a Chinese gambling place at night. (They went there whenever they were out of food.) Their life was easy-going. Though the wage wasn't high, you could live on your income. Sickness was the only problem. Being young, they didn't worry about their health, though. They got by all right.

Q. In 1924, Japanese immigration was banned, so that Japanese ladies couldn't come here any more. I hear forty-two percent of the Issei were single and remained unmarried throughout their lives. Not too many Issei returned to Japan. Thus, they remained unmarried. Few Issei married among the Nisei.

A. Very few.

Q. Is your wife a Nisei?

A. She was born in Japan.

Q. Did she come here when she was young?

A. When she was nine years old.

Q. Does she speak Japanese as well as Issei?

A. She speaks English better. She got her education here. She finished up to the third grade of elementary school in Japan. Her father was the owner of NP Hotel. Her parents were from good families. Her father was an interesting person. He had four brothers. He didn't notify anybody when he left Japan. Everybody wondered where he had gone.

Then, he wrote them from the U.S. He had his wife and children. My wife was born. He didn't even tell his wife. Husbands today tell their wives where they will go. But he didn't. He was easy going. He didn't tell his wife that he would go to California. He used to be a village chief.

Q. Did he call his family later?

A. Yes, much later.

Q. Your wife had become nine years old by the time he called them.

A. Right.

Q. Which language do you speak best, English or Japanese?

A. Japanese. Because of the guests...

Q. How did you feel when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor?

A. I felt Japan had done a very foolish thing. I was afraid Japan must be put into a bad situation. I was at the Buddhist church with my children then. I didn't take it personally. Later at night, I heard that the F.B.I. had taken away some Japanese people for interrogation.

Q. Did you hear of it from your friends?

A. Yes. I couldn't understand why. Being innocent, I didn't imagine that the same thing would happen to me. I just thought about my business. I was sure that Japanese airplanes wouldn't land on the West Coast.

Q. What happened after that?

A. One Japanese after another was captured here and there. They never returned home. They were taken to the Immigration Office. They weren't criminals. I couldn't understand why. Later, I understood that the U.S. government had taken an emergency measure in order to prevent Japanese people from contacting Japan and from participating in sabotage. My turn finally came later.

Q. What was a reason for you?

A. I didn't know at first. It was because I was president of the Junior Division of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce. I found that out later. The F.B.I. had it on record that I had guided a Japanese Naval officer to the Boeing Co. when he had visited the U.S. for inspection. Because of the record, I was suspected of having some kind of contact with Japan.

Q. Did you know about your arrest beforehand?

A. No, I didn't. A couple of F.B.I. personnel came over and told me that they had something to talk to me about. They said that I might stay overnight and I should take my pajamas with me. I took my pajamas with me. When I got to the Immigration Office, I saw the people who had been arrested before. Some of them had been sent there, too. But I was confident that the U.S. wouldn't do such an unreasonable thing. I left my business to my wife. My bank account and other property were made into frozen assets. My wife could get money for payments without any documents. She got money from the bank by submitting a report.

Q. She took care of the business?

A. She did everything. We didn't know what would happen to us. We stayed in a tent dwelling in the camp. It wasn't a proper place to sleep. We had no bath but only a simple shower. The toilet wasn't bearable. We made beds for ourselves, five people including our three children. We lived there. After being arrested, I couldn't go back to the plant. I left it as it was. The employees continued working there.

Q. Did you own a house?

A. We rented a house. I felt uneasy about our future. Some people were captured at night (on very short notice). It was pitiful. Fortunately, few Japanese people owned houses then. Most of them were living in hotels.

Q. Were you allowed to make a phone call to your family? How long did you stay at the immigration office?

A. I stayed there for three weeks.

Q. Did you call your family?

A. Yes, when I had something to tell them. It wasn't impossible to contact my family. My children visited me once in a while. We had no privacy, though. A guard was with us. My children, being small, couldn't understand why I was kept there.

Q. How old were they.

A. The bigger one was six or seven years old. The smaller one was about one year old.

Q. Where was the hearing held?

A. It was held in North Dakota within three months.

Q. After you'd waited for three weeks?

A. I was sent to North Dakota. I mingled with the fishermen from Terminal Island, the people from Sacramento and (). Some people were sent to Seattle. The first group of people were sent to (Montana). I was sent to Stockton.

Q. You stayed there for three months, and then had the hearing didn't you?

A. Yes, about three months later. The paper, which proved that I'd abandoned my property rights in Japan in order to establish my residence here for my children, happened to be presented at the hearing. I wrote a letter to a local court in Japan, and the court sent me the paper. The F.B.I. picked it up at my place. They thought it might be an important document. I told them to read the paper. "Though I'm Japanese, I've resolved to quit Japan and live in the U.S. for my children. Have I

committed a crime bad enough to be kept here?" I said so at the hearing. I asked the board members to read the paper. An interpreter read it and translated it. "You say you're (one of the servants). We'll take care of this matter," they said. I was able to show it, because (I was in Washington, D.C.). I said to the members of the board. I said, "I'd like to be a servant. Few people actually made documents to prove their resolution. However, most of the Issei immigrants are willing to live here for good. Whether they make a document to prove their decision or not is irrelevant. The U.S. is also to blame. Because we are Japanese, we were refused the right to be naturalized. If you had allowed us, I could have been the first one to apply for U.S. citizenship. If so, I would have been a naturized American and wouldn't have been kept here." They said, "We understand."

Q. Is that so.

A. I was released shortly after that.

Q. Here?

A. To Seattle. Not yet (). My family was in (Pierup)(sic)

Q. In (Pierup)?(sic)

A. It was an evacuation. They were sent to the assembly center in (Pierup) in May. I was arrested in January. After staying at the immigration office, I was transferred to North Dakota in the beginning of February. I returned sometime between March and May.

Q. What did your wife do with your things?

A. She closed up our business. She enclosed a part of the plant, put our things in, and locked it.

Q. Were your things safe?

A. Yes, they were.

Q. You were lucky. Most of the Issei had their things stolen.

A. It was good that I had leased it to a responsible person. No one could break into my office, since it had been locked. People went in and out around my office. There was a hotel upstairs, and there were some people walking around throughout the night. I sold the 9,000 dollar building for 75,000 dollars in cash.

Q. Did you sell it?

A. Yes. It was a long time ago. If I still owned it, I could sell it for 120,000 dollars. It was a nice place. The building is now used as a Greyhound Bus depot. The property was too good to give up. They wanted to buy it very badly. I didn't know what to do with the building. Looking back, it was just like a gift from Mr. (Kahkey), for it was almost free.

Q. What was ^{Pierup} (Pierup) like? You met your family there.

A. They welcomed me. Seeing their life there, I couldn't help feeling miserable. They were in a place worse than cowshed. There was only one thin board between your room and the next room.

Q. Was it cold there?

A. No, it wasn't. The life in the assembly center was temporary. I told everybody that the internment camp was way better than that. We interns were kept in a former army camp in North Dakota. The building was fine. Mr. Abe, who is a manager of the Bank of Tokya now, was the head of our camp. The Bank of Tokya used to be called Yokohama (Civic) Bank. I was his executive secretary in the camp. We demanded a good office for our camp headquarters and got it. I felt sorry for my children, being kept in such an awful place. Though it was only temporary, I felt miserable.

(61c)
Q. How long did you stay at (Pierup)?

A. Not too long. We were there for about the same length of time I had been in North Dakota. About a month or two. In the meantime, a crew was sent to Idaho to construct a camp there.

Q. Did anything unusual happen in the assembly center?

A. Nothing in particular. Everybody gave up and took it as a wartime misery. Japanese people co-operate in times of hardship. Everybody was considerate enough not to cause any inconveniences.

Q. Was it awful to line up for meals?

A. The assembly center was fairly well organized.

Q. Was it?

A. Feeling worried about my records for internment, I wasn't in the mood to complain about anything. The young people there took care of things very well. Everything went smoothly.

Q. Were you about forty-years old then?

A. I was forty-two years old.

Q. Were you? Where did you go then?

A. (Minnesota).

Q. How was (Minnesota).

A. I wanted to take it easy without working. The headquarters asked me to apply for a job. I was leading a lazy life without work. Even if you work hard you never know what might happen to your life. I had given up in life to a certain degree. I just hoped that my children would lead a happy life. I said that I'd rather make my best efforts toward my children's education. Housing was a big problem at that time. The barracks built in the camp varied in size. Some of them were for three or four people, others weren't. More and more people were accommodated

in the barracks. If you were lucky, you got a single room. It was a problem, especially for ladies. If several ladies were put in a four-people-size room, they usually had some problems. If it was only one party, no problems arose. One young lady, whose husband was in an internment camp, was put in a room with some other ladies. Being in a different situation from the other ladies, she didn't get along with them. Since the housing was such a problem, I was asked by the person in charge to help. I reluctantly agreed to become something like a housing adjustor. There was a big segregation between pro-Japan and pro-American people in Tule Lake, which was a problem. When newcomers arrived from Minnesota, we had to arrange rooms for them. We were notified the number of people coming. They were in need of proper rooms. One lady was occupying a room for four people all by herself. We had to share rooms equally. Six or seven people worked for me to straighten the rooms. Growing crops of our own was another problem.

Q. What's that?

A. Crops. We had to make arrangements for our plan. We had meetings in Salt Lake City and Chicago. Each internment camp sent its representative. I represented our camp. We discussed how we should carry out our original plan. I suggested that each camp should collect three or four thousand dollars in cash and we should buy seedlings and other necessary goods through a buyer. Good items were put in a freeze during the war. It was hard to get them. However, we had to have certain things in the camp such as clothing. We rotated goods with \$4,000 in cash. My suggestion was accepted by the others. Thus, our system of purchasing goods was determined. I became a chairman of the board in Minnesota. The administration there requested us to establish our self-organization or

community counsel. Our self-government was established in the camp. We discussed how we should organize it. I suggested that we should have a binary committee, and that we should organize a cabinet system - a mayor, counsel or board system. A board system was adopted by the camp in Minnesota. Every district sent two representatives. There were forty-two districts in the camp. In other words, we had eighty-two representatives in all. Each block sent one person as a trustee - forty-one trustees formed a counsel. A board chairman was elected by general vote. I was elected. I quit my other jobs because of that. In the meantime, we received a "volunteer call" from Washington D.C. It caused a big dispute. The majority of the Japanese people there were against it. I said that we'd better make it clear where we should stand. We Issei are Japanese, whereas the Nisei who were born in the U.S. are American. There is a difference even between parents and children. We parents should protect the Nisei's stand. I had a meaning experience in Bismark. There were 800 Germans in the camp. Some were kept in the camp simply because they were from Germany. Others were kept there because they had refused to be naturalized in the U.S. The former group of Germans and the latter didn't get along well. The former called the latter second class Germans, and called themselves first class. What's the difference? The first class Germans said, "We have immigrated here, and were given privileges of naturalization. If you're anti-American, it is wrong for you to have come here, in the first place. We don't want to talk with such fools. Germans were definite about themselves. The former group of Germans were proud of themselves for being captured by the U.S. for the sake of their mother country, whereas the latter looked down on their pride. The Issei are Japanese, whereas the Nisei are American. There

should be a distinction between the two. I felt it wasn't good for the Nisei to be staying in the camp. I agitated for the Nisei to go to Washington D.C. as volunteers, which would be helpful for them. The Issei should encourage the Nisei to take action for a better future. I worked hard for them. As a result, my grave was built.

Q. Did the pro-Japan people build it?

A. Yes. One morning, a friend of mine informed me that my grave had been built. I said, "How fortunate I am! I'll visit my grave." I visited my grave. There the following was written on the gravestone: Yoshito Fujii and forty-two other people are traitors to Japan. I took it to my office. At that time I wasn't concerned for my life. I felt it was my fate to fight for righteousness even if I was to be murdered. I had a very firm belief. I had courage, too. I sent volunteers to Washington D.C., and completed my term in office. I was elected for the second term again. I was engaged in (), the position not to (). I felt I was wasting time dealing with such foolish people. I had a (personal) contract for two years. I felt I should take my children with me. I had a business contract in Seattle, too. It was for three years. I wondered what I should do from that point. Because of the contract, I returned here in April. I wanted to take a look at the actual conditions in Seattle. On the first of January, the ban on Japanese people was lifted on the Pacific Coast. If you wanted to, you could return. I wondered how American society as a whole would accept us. I knew I could force myself to return and hire somebody to take care of my business. The idea came to my mind, and I decided to return. I came back here in April to see what was going on. I refused to become a board chairman. I had to choose one or the other. I tendered my resignation, and left there in April. I've been living here since then.

I didn't return there. My family joined me around September. I returned to Seattle and took care of NP Hotel. One old caucasian gentleman managed the hotel. He was stubborn. The Filipinos were prejudiced against the Japanese then, for the Japanese soldiers had treated the Filipinos cruelly. Some Filipinos were dangerous. The F.B.I. protected Japanese people. The caucasian old man, whom we hired, was tough enough to handle the Filipinos. That's why nothing dangerous happened to us. When Japan surrendered, I was at NP Hotel. There were five or six people gathering there, and we cried. All of us were Issei.

Q. Had you foreseen the defeat of Japan from the beginning?

A. Yes, I had. I thought the war itself was foolish. While I was organizing the business on crops during the war, I made a trip on a train between Minnesota and Chicago. On my way there, I saw thousands of airplanes. I felt that Japan could never defeat the U.S. Economical differences were out of proportion. A number of airplanes... Shortly after that, Hiroshima was bombed. I felt Japan should give up as soon as possible. Japan was holding her pride as an undefeated nation at that time. I was afraid of the result of the war. I could tell that it was a hopeless war for Japan from the beginning.

Q. Didn't you have to sign any paper to determine your loyalty in (Minnesota)? It was required in some other camps.

A. No we didn't. No records were kept.

Q. Was it only required at Tule Lake?

A. I guess that Japanese people managing the headquarters there had forced it.

Q. Being pro-American, you must have been called a dog or something behind your back.

A. People didn't show their hatred outwardly. They were rather quiet. The pro-Japanese outnumbered the pro-Americans in Tule Lake. There arose the problem of volunteers in Salt Lake City and (Mickael). We discussed a lot of problems at Hat Mountain.

Q. Did you go to Salt Lake City to discuss crops?

A. No. The problem of volunteers.

Q. What kind of volunteers?

A. The Nisei.

Q. Oh, the Nisei. You held a meeting to discuss that too.

A. Yes, we did.

Q. Each camp sent its representative?

A. Yes. I represented our camp as a board chairman. We discussed what would be the best decision. At that time (). That was called off. News came to the camp. The volunteers sent from Minnesota were doing very well. Picking up coal was another problem. Truck drivers went to pick up coal. They went (). Those truck drivers and the administrators had conflicts once in a while.

Q. Were they Japanese?

A. The drivers were Japanese, whereas the administrators were caucasians. They had a clash of interests. The Japanese drivers got special permits to go outside of the camp on duty. Then, they took a longer time than they should have. Some drivers even shopped for others. They misused their privilege. That's why the argument had arisen. The administrators made guide-lines in order to eliminate the drivers' idleness. The drivers, who were supposed to follow the guide-lines, rejected them. There occurred a dispute between the two parties. Then, the drivers threatened that they would have a strike. And they did have a strike.

It was in the midst of the cold winter season. Those who suffered most because of the strike were the camp residents. All were Japanese. We didn't have any coal in the below zero weather. We were inconvenienced. The families with babies were miserable. They couldn't make a fire. After all, the drivers didn't lose anything. The residents suffered most. I hoped everything would go as smoothly as possible. Whenever such a problem arose, I couldn't sleep at night. I was called for a discussion even at midnight. School, checks on resident cards..... various small problems arose one after another.

Q. What was the school problem about?

A. Teachers complained that some teachers' wages were better or worse than others. The same problem happened at a hospital. The amount of their wages was the subject. There were two kinds of wages, \$16 and \$19. The difference was only three dollars. Human beings are dirty. Some teachers were excited about the difference and made a protest against it. Various problems arose. Each problem was brought to me as a board chairman. I had to solve it smoothly. People say that they had such a hard time in the camp. However, some people disagreed about closing the camp at the end. Being used to the camp, they didn't want to leave there. Cooks served meals regularly. The U.S. Army decided to open up the relocation camp so that we could return home. Then, some people opposed the decision. I wanted to return to my home state. Some people, who didn't feel too much of a lack for things, welcomed that kind of living environment. I couldn't think about myself only. I had to take my children into consideration. So many men, so many minds, at times. Religious people were fine. Having studied sociology, I was able to understand people well.

Q. What?

A. Sociology.

Q. What do you mean?

A. Sociology.

Q. Oh, Issee.

A. It didn't help my business, but.....

Q. You came back here in January. What did you do at first?

A. I ran NP Hotel.

Q. You had a place to stay, didn't you?

A. Yes. My parents-in-law owned the hotel. They had a three-year contract with a real estate company. The company managed the hotel. Since the three-year contract had expired, I took over the business. It was a good chance. I didn't manage it directly, though. Employing an acting manager, I didn't have to do anything except for some bank business.

Q. Did you discharge the manager?

A. No. A caucasian was acting manager.

Q. Did you manage it?

A. Yes. We kept the same employees as before.

Q. When you returned here, did people abuse you?

A. No. People couldn't distinguish us from the Chinese. Chinese people were running the same businesses as before. They had a cue, but I didn't. People believed there were no Japanese around. Japanese people were considered bad, because some Japanese workers had been saboteurs at one time. (). The people in the area, to which I'd returned, trusted us.

Q. Your transaction was carried out rather smoothly.

A. That's right.

Q. Did you stay there?

A. Yes. I stayed there for a long time. I got a notice whenever somebody was leaving the camp. I arranged a room for him.

Q. How many rooms did NP Hotel have?

A. 120 or 130 rooms.

Q. It was large! Was the hotel always full?

A. Yes, it was. Quite a few people left the camp and came to me. There was a Chinese restaurant across the street. They ate meals there. I had known the restaurant owner for a long time. He treated us customers well. I didn't know whether or not he called us "Japs" inside, though. Since he made money, he welcomed us as customers.

Q. I'll bet he did.

A. Professor Wilson of the University of Washington...not Wilson...

I can't recall his name...He encouraged me after I returned here. He said, "I went to Japan in 1947, and I know things Japanese. The war had been promoted by the young military officers, but not by Japanese people as a whole. Japan was defeated as a result, which had been obvious from the start. It was a hopeless war for Japan. Now that Japan has lost the war, she is like a crab having its legs torn off. We can't leave Japan, with such a large population in the lurch. The U.S. had won a victory on the surface; however, Japan won it in a real sense. Take the Japanese people in the U.S. for example. Their abilities are not inferior. Their inventions are not inferior." He must have been thinking of such world famous Japanese as Dr. Noguchi. He also said, "England had been the best country in spinning until Japan got ahead. The Japanese are very expert at spinning, chemistry, and physics. If Japan makes her best efforts with the economy, she will become one of the leading nations of the world before long. Don't feel discouraged!" What he had advised us of was true. Japan returned a merchant vessel to the U.S. The vessel arrived at (). There were over 5,000 people on board. I, Mr. Mihara

and another man _____ I can't recall his name _____ three of us visited them with cigarettes as our gift. We wanted to give a package of cigarettes to each one on board. All of them on board gathered around us. They asked us to make a short speech. Mr. Mihara and I spoke before them. I said, "Don't be discouraged! Just accept the fact that Japan has been defeated. If Japan gives up swords and stands up with science, she will be one of the leading nations of the world before long. That's what one learned caucasian believes. Take my word for it and contribute to Japan's reconstruction after you go back. One of the crew at that time recently came here again. We were amazed that the economy of Japan has turned out exactly as he had predicted. He was a great man. He had been a real prophet.

Q. What kind of boat was it?

A. Japanese merchant vessels had all been destroyed during the war. After the war, the U.S. lent American transport ships to Japan.

Q. Did you make a speech before the Japanese crew?

A. Yes. The Japanese government had sent the crew to the U.S. to return the ships within two years. Since the crew wasn't allowed to land, we visited them on the ship.

Q. You managed NP Hotel. Did you re-open your bottling company?

A. Yes. Oh, no no. It was only before the war. I put it to lease and sold it after the war.

Q. Did you sell it right after the war?

A. I returned here right after the war and sold it. (The buyer) owned a company and was managing his business here. I gave up my bottling company. That was because all of the Japanese groceries had been closed down.

Q. I see.

A. The Japanese groceries were taken over by chain-stores after the war. There used to be a lot of small Japanese groceries here. They carried soda. Chain-stores came out only after the war. There were none before the war.

Q. It was all the better to have a change in your business.

A. Your're right. Such a small business couldn't have competed with a large chain-store business. The change of course was good for me.

Q. Did you become a manager of NP Hotel after the war?

A. Yes. I opened Harold Hotel, which is () at present. Then I opened my business in (Wilhard) and (Lyvolia) Park. I sold the one in (Wilhard). The county bought Harold Hotel. I own three businesses now. Apartments. I'm supposed to be semi-retired, but I can't take it easy.

Q. Are you tired?

A. No. I'm all right.

Q. The caucasian people here were pretty good, weren't they?

A. Yes, they were. The caucasians here were gentler than other caucasians.

Q. They were. The caucasians in California weren't gentle.

A. The Caucasians in California have had experience with other bad minority groups such as Mexicans. The black people have started to live here only recently. There are only a small number of Members and Filipinos here. The majority of the population here are Norwegians. They are gentle people from northern Europe. Japanese people ran hotels, and Norwegians stayed there. Those caucasians and Japanese people got along well. They relied on the middle-aged Japanese maids there. And the maids' services, as Japanese women, were good. I'm afraid that our community has been breaking down ever since the Mexicans started to move in.

Q. Did you get any help from your relatives when you returned here?

A. No, I didn't get any help.

Q. Around 1920 or 1930, were there a lot of poor Japanese people here?

A. No, not too many. Japanese people could make their living all right as long as they had jobs. Most of them were unmarried. Not having any children, they were free to work as much as they wanted to. Japanese people had a lot of job offers because of their diligence. They worked very hard. Washing dishes, kitchen helpers for clubs...most of the kitchen helpers for hotels were Japanese. They got a job readily through their friends. As long as they were working, they weren't poor.

Q. Statistically speaking, there were few Japanese women in the U.S. around the time you came here. Most of the Japanese men were single when they came here. Did you hear of any problems between men and women?

For example, that somebody's wife was seduced by some other men...

A. No, I didn't. There were quite a few prostitutes here. Prostitution was widely practiced. Though there were few Japanese women here, Japanese men had no problem in getting women. When a man went out on the street, prostitutes called him saying, "Come on, come on."

Q. Were any of the owners of prostitutes' quarters Japanese?

A. No, I'll bet caucasian men were the prostitutes' patrons. Young women. I don't know how prostitution was operated. Single men had no difficulty in getting women. Prostitutes called them in. Though they had money, Japanese single men didn't have too much recreation here. Those men who were extremely busy with their business didn't want to spend time and money on women. However, those who wanted to play around, used money for women. A lot of women were available.

Q. Was there a group of Japanese hoodlums here?

A. No Japanese hoodlums were here. People working at the club were tough, though.

Q. What kind of club was it?

A. It was a gambling club. It was the only gambling club owned by a Japanese person. They didn't form a group of gangsters. They just worked at the club. No groups. No problems related to gangsters occurred in Seattle.

Q. I'd like to take a look at your statistics. What do you think about the Sansei? How many grandchildren do you have?

A. I have seven.

Q. Do you have any great grandchildren?

A. Not yet. These days I really think it is true with the Sansei.

The Nisei, who observed their fathers as youngsters, don't realize how hard their fathers struggled. The Sansei, whose grandfathers are dead, feel amazed at how great their grandfathers were. Old people were great.

The Sansei question themselves about whether they can do the same thing their grandfathers had done in the past. Thinking about it, they come to the realization that what their grandfathers had done wasn't easy. How great their grandfathers were! They've started to appreciate the Issei's footsteps. The Nisei don't feel the same. They are too subjective to realize what the Issei actually had done. The Nisei's fathers worked terribly hard. But they didn't appreciate the Issei's hard life. The Sansei can realize whatever the Issei had done was great.

Q. Do you think it important for the Sansei to identify themselves as Japanese or Japanese-American? That is, their grandfathers came from Japan and Japan is their country of origin.

A. I think they should.

Q. Do you think it important?

A. Yes, I do. It's not too important for some Japanese. One Japanese family has three caucasian daughter-in-laws. In my case, all of my in-laws are Japanese. We never know whom the Sansei will marry in the future.

I brought our family genealogy back when I made a trip to Japan. I showed it to my children and grandchildren. They were deeply impressed by it. I showed them when our family had started. Our family has been continuing for 1700 or 1800 years. They were amazed. I spoke up to a certain degree at one time. I said, "We Japanese didn't appear in the U.S. by accident." What about making a genealogy of the Issei, Nisei and Sansei? It will be interesting in the future. People who have their family records should dedicate them. If we donate reports on Japanese-Americans to schools, students may get interested in us. I don't know when. It may not be valuable to the Nisei and Sansei at present, however, it may be valuable ten generations later or something. When I travelled to Japan, I saw children hand-in-hand visiting the shrines and temples, which was a very beautiful sight. I can't see such a sight in the U.S. The principal of my old high school asked me to make a speech for forty-five minutes. He liked my speech and delivered me a letter of appreciation. I got on a platform and made a speech before four hundred high school students. As it was, during the summer season, all of them were seated in their white shirts without jackets. I talked for forty-five minutes at the high school in Hiroshima. I talked about my personal history. For instance, how many years I had graduated from high school, and when I had left for the U.S. I made the speech three years ago while students' riots were going on here and there. There were students' riots going on in the U.S. at that time, too. I said to them, "Don't copy such a foolish thing from the U.S. You should study and learn. Science is advancing rapidly. Those students, who can't catch up with their studies, cause riots. They feel discouraged with study. Thinking realistically, I have been learning something new every day since my graduation from college about fifty years ago. I consider study a life-long task. I learn something

new everyday. I told the students about a TV program which I had watched at a hotel in San Diego. The theme was: Every living thing has feelings. You put a plant here and try to kill it. Then, a sudden inspiration works on the plant. I had never thought about it till I saw the program. The program made me think. After I returned home, I took a look at the plants at home first of all. I also checked the carp in the pond. I decided not to forget to feed the fish. Eventually, the fish learned to anticipate footsteps. Something happened one Sunday.. One of my grandchildren, who kept his fish in my pond came over to see the fish with his friend. He named the fish "Mikan" or something. The pond was full of water lilies and they couldn't see the fish well. They stirred the water with a stick. I told them not to do such a thing but to copy what his grandpa would do. I said, "Come on, come on, gently. Then, all of the fish came up. I said, "Every living thing has feelings. You should be nice to them next time." Your heart communicates with other living things. Things look different according to your outlook. You shouldn't waste even a minute. I still have new things to learn. Riots are a waste of time. I was impressed with seeing the children hand-in-hand visiting the shrines and temples. It was a beautiful sight. If Japanese people learn the traditional Japanese spirit of 2,000 years ago, and return to the original spirit of our national foundation, Japan will make more progress. In other words, if Japanese people stand up as responsible people, Japan will advance more. The principal was happy about my speech and gave me a letter of appreciation. He was very courteous. In short, I'd like to think about things accurately. The Sansei and Yonsei's future can be bright depending on their way of thinking. You're in such a position as to help the Sansei and Yonsei. I've had such an experience. It is pleasant to give your opinion and to be appreciated by others. My opinions weren't that great, though.

I read a book in Japan, (and questioned myself on whether or not I had my own opinions then).

Q. Let me read this.

A. I'll send it to you.

Q. A Zerox copy or something....When did you participate in the Buddhist Church for the first time?

A. After 1925.

Q. You were twenty three or four years old.

A. I was twenty-four years old. I was attending school. I was attending various churches such as the Methodist Church. I'm sure I still have it. The young people at the Buddhist Church had published a monthly journal for the first time. I led the group. It was around 1926. The journal was called "Lotus."

Q. Do you still keep it?

A. I have one neat copy of it. I'd had such experiences before. I'd edited a quarterly journal in Minnesota. Though my writing isn't the best, I like composition.

Q. If you like it, you can improve it.

A. I'm not sure if my writing has improved. Various places ()...

Q. When was the branch established?

A. It was organized in 1901.

Q. Oh, your brother had founded it by then.

A. Yes. The present branch was established in 1940, before the war. The war started in 1944.

Q. Then...

(pause in recording)

A. I had to set it up some how. I was in a hard position. I don't know if it had been written in our church history, but I see it in our records.

The branch was founded in 1901. Its seventy-fifth anniversary will be in 1976. I want to complete writing a history book by that time. I've collected various materials.

Q. How did you handle the financial problem?

A. Some people donated their own money and thus solved the problem.

Q. They paid for everything. Great!

A. Yes. Several people did it. Looking back, I realize that they'd donated money which was important to them in the midst of the evacuation. They didn't know about the future, and the money was precious to their families. In spite of that, they were generous enough to donate the money voluntarily. They paid off those debts for the church. They must have made up their minds firmly. Since coming back here, I've been thinking of giving them a reward in return for their kindness whenever I have a chance. I'm planning to organize a recognition committee and award them. Though they hadn't been especially active at church, they coordinated themselves during emergencies. All of the church leaders had been picked up because of the war; therefore, only those members who weren't active at church were left. My obligation was heavier because of that. I had to straighten out a lot of the business problems. I felt it was a heavy obligation.

Q. Well, I've asked you about various things in detail.

A. I'm not sure what would be most helpful for you to hear.

Q. You've been very helpful.

A. I hope I can help you even a little.

Q. I wonder what I should do about this.....

A. Let me know your mailing address.

Q. I don't have my name card with me.

A. I'd like to have your phone number, too.

Q. Please call me whenever you come down to Sacramento.

A. There's Mr. Masuda in our Sacramento branch.

Q. Is he new? The former priest was transferred. I was acquainted with him. I haven't met the new Priest yet.

A. Recently (). He is an English speaking priest.

Q. Oh yes. The mother of one of our church members attended a funeral the other day...

A. If you tell him "Fujii," he'll know.

Q. I'm going to (interview) the members there. When I do...

A. There's a lady in Sacramento, who used to live here when she was young.

Q. What's her name?

A. I don't know where she lives. I've heard of her from the people in the branch. Yuki Higashi.

Q. Is she an Issei?

A. She's a Nisei. She's pretty old.

Q. If students want to listen to this tape, would you mind their hearing it?

A. Not at all.

Q. In addition, when we publish your tape, you have the property right or literary right. If you don't mind, we'd like you to entrust your tape to our committee.

A. That's fine with me.

Q. Will you sign here?

A. Sure.

Q. Today's date is May the twentieth, 1974. I'd like you to sign and write your address.

A. Do I sign here?

Q. Yes. A great signature! Thank you very much. What's your zip code?

A. 98144.

Q. Thank you very much for spending such a long time with me. I'll write you. If somebody wants to study about the Buddhist Church, may I give your name to him? He can read your book.

A. Sure. In it is a manuscript written long time ago. In 1946 or so.

Q. In the Christian Church, we have a written constitution called "Akashi."⁶
Do you have such a book in the Buddhist Church? You, as a layman, state your faith as being of such and such a nature.

A. We have no books like that in the Buddhist Church.

Q. You don't?

A. No. We just publish a monthly journal. It's not too meaningful.
It's just a report.

Q. Just a report? Even a priest has to pledge it as a layman. Your personal history is unique.

A. Not too much.

Q. You keep the records methodically.

A. (). I should organize these written materials, but I can hardly find time. I'm a little troubled.

Q. True. If you hire students to organize these materials, they might write a thesis or something.

A. Some people ask me to let them borrow these. The other day, a person in a Ph.D. program at the University of Washington made a new theory. He wrote a Ph.D. thesis on the Japanese family system. He was about to complete it and wanted me to look it over.

Q. I see.

A. Being busy, I'm not doing enough things.

Q. Well, thank you very much.

A P P E N D I X

Osenbei¹ - a rice cracker with a soy sauce flavor. Page 3.

Nishi Hongan, jr.² - one of the largest Buddhist Churches in Japan. Page 4.

Jodo Shinshu³ - one of the main Buddhist sects. Page 4.

Namuamidabutsu⁴ - a Buddhism prayer for protection. Page 8.

Kimono⁵ - a Japanese costume. Page 12.

Akashi⁶ - literally means testimony in Japanese. Page 47.